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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 28 November 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing with regard to the discussion of agenda item 55 (b), entitled "Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation", that took place during the twenty-seventh meeting of the Second Committee, on 10 November 2005.

At that meeting, the delegation of Armenia expressed its criticism on the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railroad initiative, which was presented by the delegation of Azerbaijan as one that would "ensure unimpeded movement of carriages from Europe to all countries of the region and vice versa". The delegation of Armenia stated that the initiative was exclusively political envisaging construction of a new costly infrastructure despite and in circumvention of existing ones. The Kars-Gyumri-Tbilisi railroad already exists, which can be revitalized and become operational with almost no cost and in little time. This existing railroad, however, is not being utilized because Turkey and Azerbaijan have kept Armenia's western and eastern borders closed unilaterally for over a decade, intending that to serve as political and economic pressure. This has resulted in this existing and functional railroad being excluded from the regional transit network.

In response to Armenia's statement, a number of unsubstantiated allegations were voiced, which we deem necessary to clarify.

An opinion was expressed that Armenia, which had allegedly "opted out" of regional cooperation, was now complaining about its "isolation". Such a statement is as dismaying as it is false. Armenia is a member of all regional organizations and

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is an active participant of major regional projects, such as the Transport Corridor; Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), Interstate Oil and Gas Transmission to Europe (INOGATE), the North-South Corridor and others in which it has chosen to participate. At the same time, Armenia has rejected any proposal, which required excessive political concessions in exchange for participation in certain energy projects. Attempts to construe this conscious political decision not to be blackmailed as voluntary "isolation" can, therefore, be nothing more than wishful thinking.

As for the statement on "Armenia's pressing development needs", it is another manifestation of Azerbaijan's desperate hope that if they just hold out long enough, Armenia's economy will collapse under political pressure. Azerbaijan's calculations that a blockade of Armenia would mean that our economic and social conditions would plummet while their oil-based economy would grow have proved totally faulty. Quite the contrary, having managed to develop a diversified economy and sustained export growth free of the "Dutch disease", Armenia has for the past five years registered steady double-digit economic growth. Accordingly, the *Human Development Report 2005* rated Armenia No. 83, well ahead of all its immediate neighbours.

Regarding the allegations by Turkey that Armenia does not recognize the Armenian-Turkish border as defined by the Treaty of Kars, I would like to state the following: the aforesaid treaty was signed in 1921, between Turkey on one side and the Soviet Socialist Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on the other, with the participation of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. After gaining its independence in 1991, the Republic of Armenia declared itself the successor of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia, thus assuming the legal obligations of the former. Therefore, claims of "Armenia's denial of the Kars Treaty" are legally invalid, since the Republic of Armenia has never denounced it. As for the Turkish allegations regarding the Declaration of Independence of Armenia, it should be noted that the reference to Western Armenia was made only in the context of recognition of the Armenian Genocide at the beginning of the twentieth century in that historical geographical area.

Furthermore, it must be emphasized that Turkey — the fervent "defender" of the Treaty, has been in continuous violation of that treaty's provisions regarding the opening of communications (article 17) by keeping the Armenian-Turkish border closed, thus imposing a land blockade against Armenia. While unilateral coercive measures are unacceptable in general, there can be no justification for such a policy conducted by a country that has embarked on the road towards membership in the European Union. With regard to the claims by the delegation of Turkey that Armenian ships freely pass through the Turkish straits and freely use Turkish ports, I have but to inform that there are simply no ships registered in the Republic of Armenia to use any sea port, including the Turkish ones.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Armenia's view that politically motivated projects that do not involve all States in the region cannot in any way contribute to stability and prosperity in South Caucasus. It is genuine regional cooperation, with the participation of all countries and through the revival and utilization of the existing infrastructure that would allow for the creation of a favourable environment conducive to lasting peace and security in the region.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 55 (b).

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative